



Sen. Dale Brandland's

UPDATE FROM OLYMPIA

3/21/03

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Committee Assignments
Agriculture (Vice Chair)
Health & Long Term Care
Judiciary

Senate Oks lawsuit reform

The Senate voted Friday for a sweeping package of limits on lawsuits that would protect doctors, governments, builders...in various legal actions.

"I'm here because of the doctors," said **Sen. Dale Brandland**, R-Bellingham, rebuffing criticisms that the lawsuit bill would limit the rights of innocent victims.

"That's not the door of the courthouse closing, that's the doctor's office closing." – *The News Tribune*, 3/15/03

The West Nile Virus is here

Sen. Dale Brandland, R-Whatcom County, is one of the co-sponsors of SB 5920, which calls for a statewide referendum to be on the ballot in the fall.

"Lots of times people think of first responders as just fire and police," said **Brandland**, former Whatcom County sheriff. "The health department is a first responder, from a health perspective." – *Bellingham Herald*, 3/12/03

Dear Friends,

The last two weeks have been a flurry of action as we spend hours on the Senate floor debating legislation that has made it through the committee process. Witnessing our democracy in action and being a part of the decision-making process has been an absolute joy and privilege.

I am pleased to tell you about legislation that passed the Senate last week – **Senate Bill 5521** – that allows insurance carriers to tailor their plans to the needs of individual small businesses in Washington state.

As many of you know, mandated benefits have driven health insurance costs for businesses through the roof. In 1963, there was one mandated benefit required of insurance sold in Washington. By 2002, there were more than 45. While large businesses may be able to absorb some of these costs, small businesses cannot. Often, a small business ends up canceling their employees' health plans simply because they can't afford the skyrocketing prices.

Senate Bill 5521 allows insurance companies to offer different health care packages based on customer needs, not state mandates. Under this bill, coverage would still include such basic services as optometrists, registered and advanced nurse practitioners, chemical dependency treatment, and mammograms. Employers would be able to purchase coverage for additional services if they so desired.

Both employees and employers benefit from this legislation. This is a huge cost for small businesses and it's about time there was some measure of relief.

I also want to quickly update you on a couple of my bills:

ESSB 5269 – Provides a mapping system for public buildings to assist first responders and law enforcement in the event of emergencies. It passed the Senate 48-0 and is now in the House State Government Committee.

ESSB 5728 – Provides for civil liability reform. It passed the Senate 28-21 and is now in the House Judiciary Committee.

I will continue to update you on these proposals and others as they make their way through the legislative process.

Dale E. Brandland, 42nd Legislative District

NOTE:

Please feel free to share this update with your friends and neighbors. If you would like to be on the e-mail distribution list, contact this office with your name and address.